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# Pastoral Morocco

Globalizing Scapes of Mobility and Insecurity



## Nomads: But how?

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### The Beni Guil

Spatial mobility has always been the strategy of nomadic groups favoring their independence in relation to the state and to sedentary groups. In the case of political or climatic instability, the tents could be packed up immediately and the herds led into a more peaceful and clement environment. The perpetual mobility in search of pastures with better vegetative cover remains the major advantage of nomads, their reason for being. Considering the aridity of the high plateaus of the eastern Moroccan steppes (210 mm/year) and the immensity of the confederation's territory (more than 26,000 km<sup>2</sup>), the Beni Guil are frequently forced to fold up their tents in search of new pastures.

The collective name Guil refers neither to a common ancestor, nor to a common territory. It rather resonates legends, which reveal essential traits of the nomadic life, for example, the choice of the tribal territory. In the legends pastoral activity is highly esteemed and often valued higher than tribal adherence: it's the grass that counts. In comparison to a green pasture, the sentiment of mere tribal allegiance means little.

For the Beni Guil spatial mobility was never an option, but a necessity. Without it, any exterior relationship would have been impossible, whether the conquest of new spaces, economic exchanges, or caravan commerce, to name but a few. Until the 1930s, no market was organized in their vast territory. For the sale of their pastoral products and the purchase of basic goods like clothing, cereals, tea, sugar, they had to move towards the markets of neighboring or faraway cities: Figuig, Beni Ounif, Debdou, Melilla, among others.

Since the 1960s, spatial mobility is nothing more than an alternative.<sup>1</sup> The tent, which still constitutes the habitation for the majority of the Beni Guil (65%), stopped being a sign of mobility. Many pastoralists bitterly remark that they are no longer nomads, *mabqinach rahbala*, even though they continue to live in tents, far from the urban centers. The local fixing of the tents, their immobilization, is however a recent phenomenon. Of the 49% of nomads affected, the majority (78%) avowed to have abandoned spatial movements after the droughts of the 1970s. The pastoralists, who continue to move and who perpetuate nomadism, adopt innova-

tions but had thus to pay by breaking with old practices. The most manifest and impressing rupture is the abandonment of the dromedary, the traditional symbol of nomadic mobility. Since the very beginning of my research, I felt that this rupture is the starting point for the description and analysis of the transformation of nomadism and of spatial mobility.

Whenever the term 'nomad/nomadic' is used to qualify the Beni Guil, it is not to define the group in its entirety, venturing from its relationship to space, but rather it is aimed at emphasizing one fundamental morphological dimension of their social organization. Nomadism cannot characterize an entire society, since it is affiliated with several forms of political and social organization. This paper will show that among the groups studied, mobility was organized in the framework of distinct, even opposite social structures, some based on contracts implying egalitarian values and norms, others founded on dependence and patronage, denoting values tied to charity. Nonetheless, whatever the social and cultural framework may be, mobility has similar effects on the political and cultural life of the nomadic groups.

In analyzing conversations with nomads, two terms implying the notion of nomadism stood out: *rebel* and *thawwel*. The verb *rebel* locally applies to movements of great amplitude, 30 kilometers or more, undertaken by a pastoralist, and the verb *thawwel* to a change of campsites in a 2.5 to 5 kilometers radius within the same pasture ground. The term *rahhal* thus designates somebody, who moves and changes the pastures during the year. In contrast, the word *mgaytan*, from the word *gten* is employed to signify a nomad's immobilization. He is the one who only moves his tent for a change of campsite. Being *rahhal*, means having the habit of moving with one's family in the search of water and pasture. It is in this sense in which the word "nomadity" (*rahla*) is used here. It designates the mobility of a family or of a group of families during the year for reasons connected to pastoral activities. In contrast, the term "transhumance" refers to a seasonal mobility that only implies the movement of some family members, sometimes even only of shepherds.

Compared to the notion of *'rab*,<sup>2</sup> which characterizes rather a culture than a mode of relations to the soil, the notion of *rahhal*, referring to spatial mobility, is less complex. The difference between these two notions is however essential. A nomad, who has permanently fixed his tent, asserts that he is no longer *rahhal*, thus underlining a change in the spatial dimension of his identity, but he still affirms his adherence to *'rab*, accentuating his cultural affinities. A Bedouin, who fixes his tent or installs himself in town, continues to share values, perceptions of social relations, knowledge of livestock and environment with his nomadic brothers. Being *a'rab*, just like being *fellah* or peasant, is a way of life, a way of connecting to the world and to society, a culture. This distinction is paramount, because the changes that I will examine here, with regard to the extremely limited time that was given for the study on the terrain, principally concern the Beni Guil as nomads. I will address norms and values and their relationships with the daily organization of pastoral production. In other words, cultural structures are not the focal point in this

paper, but rather social processes, their founding norms and values. For example, the disappearance of certain values, like charity or mutual support, and certain norms, like pastoral contracts and the adoption of others are examined here in the framework of the organization of mobility and pastoral production.

Moving the tent and the herds was more a collective task than a family affair. Traditionally the networks of social relations have been organized due to the demands of spatial mobility and pastoral production. The respective pastoral communities rarely exceeded ten households and were not 'formally' defined in referring to genealogies or normative divisions of the confederation in tribes, fractions and lineages, but originated rather from pragmatic considerations. Here they are understood as 'concrete groups' in the sense that they used to constitute a social network and an economic association in the frame of which herd and human mobility was effectively organized. They were flexible and fluid, because they formed and dissolved for primarily pastoral reasons. It is at the level of these restrained communities that the changes, which have affected spatial mobility, are observable, and at this same level that the innovations of nomads and their relationships to structural and contextual changes – concerning adaptation, commercialization, conversion, and survival – will be discussed and analyzed.

## Adaptation

The recent transformations – name it globalization – cannot be reduced to a mere series of constraints which disadvantage nomadism. For they are also a set of resources and opportunities that permit the nomads to adapt to changing conditions. Adaptation here denotes the act of benefiting from these new resources in order to perpetuate nomadism in innovative and unprecedented forms.

Whatever the daily efforts expended in the maintenance of livestock may have been in former times, it seems as if a nomad did not conceive a direct link between pastoral production and human effort. In his mind 'the herds grew naturally'. Among the Beni Guil, only the horse, a prestigious animal held by the wealthy, is nourished by barley. The fodder of all other animals was provided exclusively by pastures and no supplementary fodder was provided. Our interlocutors regret the vanishing of the old times when the herds grew naturally. If there exists such a thing as a painful innovation, then for them this undoubtedly is the introduction of external forage. Speaking of changes that have affected their society, not one of them omitted to mention the introduction of forage. "Formerly, stock grazed with its mouth, today we spend money to feed it," as one of our interlocutors put it (Rachik 2000).

The introduction of forage crops has become a focal point of reference in local history. Two dates are retained: *'am chmandar*, the "year of dried pulp" in 1978/79, and the *'am coudissa*, "the year of coudissa", named after a kind of industrially man-

ufactured fodder introduced in 1989. The retreat to external forage rapidly spread after the droughts in the 1970s. The nomads started by feeding part of their herds, notably pregnant or hurt ewes. From the 1980s onwards, the habit of forage supply massively gained ground, in other words entire herds were given supplementary fodder throughout the year. In 1991 the majority of nomads, that is 80%, practiced some form of supplementation.

The nomads however did not always appreciate the use of forage crops, which was seen as a shame (*‘ayb*). It was considered ridiculous to provide the herd with supplementary fodder, instead of simply leading it to the pastures, which at that time were abundant. Supplementation was rather viewed as burlesque behavior, as it challenged the very foundation of nomadism: the perpetual search of ‘the grass of God’. Nomads, who did not rely on the pastures and who dared to interfere with the natural growth of herds, became isolated. However, with the shrinking nomadic territory and after the degradation of pastures, aggravated by the drought of 1970, what used to be a shameful practice became a dire need.

It is quite common to explain pastoral innovations as related to droughts. Yet it must be asked why, in a region that is generally prone to droughts, it is precisely that of 1970, which triggered the massive introduction and adoption of external fodder. It has been illustrated that nomads who can no longer successfully apply traditional coping strategies are those who are willing to use new pastoral resources (Rachik 2000). The supply with forage remains a solution of substitution, but also an opportunity enabled by the new political landscape of the independent Morocco. Since, it is the state’s duty to assist the nomads, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture’s duty, for example, to subsidize the barley price.

Proximity to administrative services has become a principal resource to sustain nomadism and consequently a local concern. The administrative partition of 1976 bisected the Beni Guil in two rural communes, each administered by a *caid*, who represents the Ministry of the Interior on the local level. Gone is the time, when the *caid* was a nomad himself and, following his herds, had decision making power over the steppes. To emphasize the immobility of the new functionary and to avoid all ambiguity, he is called *caid lbirou*, chief of the bureau. It is the function of a sheikh, representing the *caid* locally, which has become a capital game. His unit of command, the *Mchikhat*, offers the ultimate administrative frame for the distribution of subsidized fodder and for the concession of other public services. Until the creation of cooperatives in 1991, it was in collaboration with the sheikh that the technicians of the administration determined the quantity and the quotas of food items allocated to nomads.

In the wake of Morocco’s independence, all tribes of the Beni Guil were grouped into six *Mchikhat*, according to the profile of the ancient *khoms*. At their heads, the Ministry of the Interior assigned a sheikh, who adhered to the nomads. He was not a functionary, but received indemnities of 700 Dh per month from the Ministry.

Table 14-1: Innovations and Their Adoption Among the Beni Guil

Innovation	Period of adoption (% of nomads interviewed)						Total
	before 1970	1970 - 1975	1976 - 1980	1981 - 1985	1986 - 1991	without date	
Abandonment of displacements	19.7	27.3	14.2	19.6	16.7	*2.2	100
Selective treatment of ewes	16.8	35.2	11.7	11.0	25.4	--	100
Abandonment of horses	14.0	33.8	12.2	10.7	29.2	--	100
Troughs	13.4	33.7	22.6	17.6	12.8	0.7	100
Transported water	8.6	37.9	18.2	16.6	13.1	6.6	100
Trucks	6.2	12.4	19.5	27.9	34.1	--	100
Fences	6.1	34.2	20.2	16.2	20.6	2.8	100
Pulp	2.2	22.8	40.1	20.5	12.6	1.7	100
Antiparasite treatment	2.2	9.6	16.3	21.8	47.4	2.7	100

Source: Rachik (2000). Remarks: \* = unknown

In order to attain access to new resources drained by the reformed administration, several tribes demanded their own *Mchikhats*. This was particularly the case for less prominent or subaltern groups, which did not furnish a sheikh. As a consequence new *Mchikhats* were created, which broke up with the old tribal divisions. In the aftermath three new autonomous *Mchikhats* were founded before 1970, seven between 1970 and 1982, and 16 after 1982. It is at the *Mchikhat* level that pastoral cooperatives have been created in the early 1990s by a development project for pasture and pastoral amelioration under the auspices of the Provincial Administration of Agriculture (Direction Provinciale de l'Agriculture, DPA).

A convention, which I attended, illustrates at which point the relationship to the administration has become important for the nomads. It took place on April 18<sup>th</sup> 1991, at the office of the rural commune of Tendrara on the initiative of the livestock service of the DPA, whose office is situated at Bouarfa, 60 km away (cf. Mahdi, this vol., Map 6-1). All local decision makers were present, the chief of the livestock service, the representative of the *caïd*, the presidents of the pastoral cooperatives, the sheikhs and notables of the concerned tribes. An item on the agenda was the definition of criteria regarding the distribution of subsidized fodder. In the course of a heated debate, several regulations were proposed: These included the reintroduction of a former regulation, which attributed equal parts to seven of the *Mchikhats* and smaller shares to two, the Oulad Mbarek and Oulad Ali Bellahcen, who hold less animals. Competing proposals called for the determination of a quota according to the total number of sheep held by each cooperative, or according to the value of shares possessed. *Mchikhats* with low animal stock defended the reintroduction of the first regulation, while those owning large numbers of livestock demanded a rule of proportionality. The sheikh of the tribe Oulad Hmad was the first to propose and support this latter rule. His colleague and accomplice from the Oulad Fars reminded that his tribe, since the colonial period, had always been

considered as a grand tribe and thus believed it unjust that fodder should be distributed without taking the groups' respective importance into account. The assembly ended without stipulating a consensus between large and small tribes.

The nomad is thus not any longer alone in time of crises. The dilapidation of traditional strategies is buffered, for example, by the possibility of acquiring external fodder even in the middle of the steppes. It also has become impossible to rely on tribal structures alone, hence the nomad has learned to lean on the administration's services, which are obliged to assist him. The DPA in return organizes campaigns of vaccination, anti-parasite baths, and – in agreements with the nomads' representatives – introduces new plants to pastures which were temporarily closed off. It has furthermore incited the nomads to create pastoral cooperatives and promised to erect shelters, and administrative buildings.

The nomad has also learned to rely on local markets, weekly or permanent, which have contributed to the integration of the local pastoral economy into the regional and national commercial fabric. The Beni Guil did not live in autarky. Their products were sold on local markets and even on foreign ones, like in Algeria, France and Great Britain. However, since 1970 it is no longer only the commercialization of their products and the purchase of merchandise that interconnects nomads to the market. The pastoral production itself, formerly relying on local resources, increasingly depends on exterior agricultural output. The local markets of Bouarfa, Tendirara and to a lesser degree Maatarka, are well provisioned and supplied. The market has thus become an important space for the diffusion of pastoral innovation, as revealed by the adoption of the sugar-beet pulp. While 48% of nomads adopted it thanks to traditional information networks (relatives: 2%, neighborhood: 10%, tribe members: 36%), 21% bought it directly from the market. The latter have asked the merchants for advice, who then showed them the nutritional qualities and the modes of preparation. Independent of the source of information, the pulp is however bought on the market. Its diffusion illustrates the speed of the adoption of external forage crops. 70% of nomads utilized it in 1991, while only 2% did so before 1970. The nomads who do not purchase pulp, bemoan its high price and the modesty of their herds. In order to face the expenses demanded by fodder, the nomads are forced to sell some of their stock on a regular basis. Camels were the first to be sacrificed. One nomad explains:

Formerly, we did not supplement, that was good, the sheep grazed the plants of God; since they 'are eating with money', they began 'to eat themselves'.

The nomad's constraint to sell an ewe in order to feed another is voiced in the expression 'the ewe eats its own sister.' This reveals a process to which the nomad had thus far hardly been used to. So far only domestic expenses justified the sale of sheep. In the past, they said, 'the herds provided for the nomad, nowadays it is the nomad who provides for the herds.' Depending on the market, the nomad is under constraint to regularly sell a part of his herd.

Animal pests, which recently ravaged the herds, are attributed by the nomads to droughts and to the degradation of pastures. In order to care for their herds, they are increasingly forced to resort to modern medication, the distribution of which was supported by the livestock keeping service. In this regard, the most widespread innovation, adopted by 67% of nomads, is usage of parasite expellants. As is true for most innovations, a tiny minority of 2% had already used this before 1970, but its massive adoption materialized relatively late. Almost half of the users (47%) first resorted to it after 1985.

In addition to feed, the nomads are daily preoccupied to supply their livestock with water. The scarcity of water complicates this task. Besides permanent orifices like springs, wells, and the '*aglat*'<sup>3</sup>, all of which are fed uniquely of phreatic sources, there exist temporary watering stations. These latter ones are constituted by swamps and underground cisterns, where waters that trickle down are accumulated. Yet rangelands are very vast and the distance between the water holes and the pastures is often large. Traditionally, the nomad used to relocate his herds towards water reservoirs. The daily march varied between 15 and 25 km, sometimes even 35 km, when water became rare due to the desiccation of temporary water holes. In 1949, the administration planned the creation of permanent watering points. They were meant to be placed at a 20 km distance from each other, each serving 10,000 ha of pasture. In 1950, for all of the high plateaus, only 120 waterspouts were counted for more than 3 million ha of steppe. This amounts to one for 30,000 ha. Moreover, 45 of them were temporary and thus empty in summer. In 1989, in the commune of Tendrara, for example, 30 deep water bores existed, of which 21 did not function. One was abandoned, six were unequipped, two were broken, seven were congested and five were dried up. Besides these boreholes there were six wells exploiting phreatic waters, one spring, and 30 underground cisterns in bad condition. In the commune of Bouarfa only four deep water bores, three springs and ten underground cisterns were counted. The steppes still lack adequate water access.

The sheep of the Beni Guil are reputed for their adaptation to the rough conditions of the steppes. Good at marching, eating little, coping comparatively well with thirst, heat and cold. In spite of these qualities the nomad is more and more forced to take care of them. After supplementary feed, the most frequently cited change for the majority of interlocutors is related to water supply. The nomads progressively abolish the habit of conducting their herds towards water holes. Herds are increasingly supplied with transported water. In 1991, 48% of nomads no longer relocated towards water orifices. Only 9% of them used transported water before 1970, compared to 56% within the 1970s and 29% in the 1980s. The nomads perceive that the life of herds progressively depends on these new practices, the transport of water and supplementary feed. One nomad emphasizes:

The sheep no longer need to march, the water holes are distant. If the sheep walk, they will soon be scrawny and drop dead from hunger. And the one transporting water is like the one supplying complementary fodder.

In the past, the sheep used to graze while walking towards the water holes. Currently, the poverty of pasture makes long marches hazardous for the herd's health. To transport the water, a truck and two iron reservoirs are needed, one reservoir serves the water transport, the other the conservation. This kind of equipment is not in the reach of all nomads. Its price is the equivalent of 20 sheep or goats. The nomad who does not possess a means of transport is obliged to at least own a cistern, where he can conserve purchased water or water donated by a relative. If this is not the case, he must pitch his tent in the proximity of a water source, in a radius seldom exceeding two or three kilometers, which often constitutes a serious constraint to his mobility.

Since 1970, the nomad continually acquires various pieces of equipment. In addition to the use of mangers and of mobile barrels, fences (*zirba*) were introduced. Before the adoption of fenced paddocks the shepherd had to sleep amongst the herd. He thus had to endure the cold and rain. At night, he attached a sort of hand-held leash (*lmers*) to an alpha ewe. This woke him up every time the ewe tried to move away. Presenting himself to an employer with a *mers* in his hand was a way of manifesting his will and disposition to be a hard worker. The adoption of the paddock is recent. The adopters constitute 70% of the nomads, while only 2% of them possessed a paddock before 1970. For the majority (87%), the primary reason to adopt it is the protection against the wolf. The paddock also serves the separation of young animals from their mothers. This constitutes the main reason for 10% of adopters and the secondary reason, after security, for 47% of them. Finally, it has to be noted that a small number of nomads (11%) use the paddock to facilitate the distribution of supplementary feed. Those without sufficient mangers successively nourish their animals in keeping a part of their herd in paddock.

## Commercialization

The nomads are conscious of the consequences that pastoral innovations induce in herd management. Until very recently, they frequented the market to sell some of their stock and to purchase basic consumer goods. Presently and to the degree that livestock producers' expenses are rising, they adopt new practices dictated by the market.

Among the Beni Guil sheep raising remains the principal activity. In 1989, they possessed 498,000 head.<sup>4</sup> The confederation bestowed its name upon a local sheep race, the *Beni Guil* (*guillia*, also called *doughma* due to the color of its brown skin) which dominates the eastern Moroccan high plateaus. From 1930 onward, live sheep of the *Beni Guil* breed were exported to France and since 1932, its wool was also sold in England. In 1938 about 50,000 sheep, that is about 8% of the entire stock, were bought from the Beni Guil, for 110 francs per head, and were then exported to Marseille. In January and February of the following year, the same

number of animals was sold at prices varying between 115 and 135 francs per head. This exceptional upsurge in the history of eastern Moroccan animal husbandry can be explained mainly by the heightened French demand for the *Beni Guil* breed.

During the 1950s, sheep of the Beni Guil race were still appreciated for the quality of their meat, most likely due to the aromatic and salty plants of the steppes' pastures and also due to its physiognomy of small sheep with relatively well-developed lamb chops and leg-of-lamb, perfectly corresponding to the taste of French customers. Each year between 150,000 and 200,000 Beni Guil sheep (1950) are exported under the name 'mouton oranais', but they are sold at higher prices than the real sheep from the Oran region (Auriac undated, 37–41).

The nomads know that the quality of their breed stock tends to get lost by using forage crops, that the meat loses its unique taste, attributed to the consumption of aromatic plants. But they also understand that the price depends more on the animal's weight than on the taste of its meat. Every practice contributing to the augmentation of sheep weight is thus welcome. One practice, which recently spread, consists of the selective treatment of the lamb, in other words not to milk the ewes having given birth to a male. The mothers' milk is directed exclusively to the male lambs. Formerly, all ewes were milked without distinction. Presently, the selective milking is highly esteemed because of its profitability. The male lamb is pampered, for it is destined for market sale, in contrast to the female lamb, which is kept to increase the herd size. This practice is a collateral effect of the fodder supplementation. The nomads often justify it by commerce (*tijara*), sale (*lbi<sup>c</sup>*), and price (*taman*): 'Formerly all ewes were milked, nowadays the male lamb is preferred. Today the male has become a commerce.' With supplementary feed, several nomads reduced the size of their herds: 'Ten fat sheep are better than 100 meager sheep.'

The Beni Guil also possess goats (99,000 in 1989) that do not constitute the real nomadic capital. Nomads notably raise them for their milk – for the goat is the poor man's cow. But goat meat was also cherished as was its hair, which until very recently was mixed with camel hair and used for the weaving of stripes (*flijs*) of tent canvas.

The most significant innovation regarding the composition of herds, is however the adoption of cattle. The Beni Guil did not possess cattle till the end of the nineteenth century. Even in the 1950s, cattle were still few in number. From the 1980s on, the number of cattle has risen considerably. It passed from 1,684 head in 1982 to 6,360 in 1989. Cattle raising was not adjusted to the ancient nomadic way of life. Cattle march slowly, consume lots of water and require appropriate pasture, for example, cows cannot be led to salty pastures. Thanks to the new possibilities these constraints are currently less important and the adoption of cattle reveals the profound changes of the nomadic society. Due to motorized transport, the slowness of cattle, their high water consumption, and the distance separating appropriate pas-

tures for sheep from those for cattle, no longer constitute invincible obstacles. The truck assures the transport of cows and water, and thus enables the pastoralist to guard sheep and cattle separately. Certain nomads apply a complex system of shepherding that often demands household division and an incessant coming-and-going between distant pastures. This is worth all the efforts, for the price of calves is increasingly attractive.

In this logic of adaptation, the nomad is forced to abandon the camel and the horse. The camel no longer meets the new requirements of transportation. The nomad utilizes materials and instruments which a camel cannot transport, like cisterns, barrels and troughs. This is why the hundreds of camels that the Beni Guil still possess are no longer used for transport. They are rather confined to shepherds living in Lmangoub for an average of 10 Dh per head and month. This region, in the tribe's south, offers appropriate pastures for camels.

The horse experiences almost the same development. The nomads possessing horses were very few. 67% of them never owned a horse, 26% gave up their horses within the 1970s, and only 7% still hold horses. The horse is exhibited preeminently at riding competitions (*fantasia*) during familial, national or local celebrations. Whenever the pastures are inaccessible, the horse is used for scouting pastures, the inspection of the herds and the shepherd, but its pastoral function seems to be secondary.

Whatever the importance of the supply with forage crops may be, herd mobility for the search of new pastures remains the main source to feed the herd. In a setting marked by the reduction of nomadism's realm, motorized transport allows a better use of the steppes. Instead of leading the herds across degraded pastures and exhausting them even more, the herds are directly transported to adequate grazing lands. The trucks also allow the use of pastures which thus far had been inaccessible due to lacking water. In 1991, 13% of the questioned nomads possessed a truck, and 43% of them bought it after the droughts in the 1970s. Besides, 46% of the questioned nomads used trucks as means of mobility, thanks to the possibility of renting them. It can be said that almost all who are still mobile, that is 49% of the surveyed nomads, employ motorized means of transportation.

By means of the truck it's possible to go to market and return to the tent the same day. In old times, the people endured, they only moved (in groups) by means of camels and animals. For our generation, motorized transport is disposable. So now, we are satisfied. Formerly, ten to fifteen days were required to go to the market and only little could be purchased. With motorized transport, what is available in Moroccan cities can be bought at Tendirara as well (Chadli Miloud).

But the truck is not simply some odd comfortable and fast substitute of the camel. It is not only a means of transport. Rather like the camel, the truck is at the heart of a network of social relations, albeit different social relations.

## Conversion

Pastoral strategies remain largely linked to traditional habitation. The construction of a house near fields would be the first step towards conversion of the nomad. 13% of nomads questioned owned a house in the countryside. However, the conversion is only total for 6%, who have completely substituted a house for the tent. For the rest, the two kinds of habitation do not exclude each other. Possessing a house and a tent is necessary for a complex strategy, which combines agriculture and herd mobility.

Small agglomerations developed at Lmangoub, Maatarka and Laghouasil, markedly among the Oulad Youb and Oulad Mbarek. The *bayta*, metaphorically a new form of the *douar*, designates the neighborhood of a small number of houses. Those of Laghouasil are composed of fifteen household heads, who engage in agriculture. Seven of them still live in tents and eight live in houses. The oldest house was constructed in 1983. None of them has abandoned the tent. Yet, their usage of the tent is variable. It can be pitched in proximity to the house, where it morphs into some kind of extension, cooking place, or habitation for the married son. Nomads, who opted for a seasonal transhumance, pack and detach their tents according to pasture conditions. Others, who have seen their herds diminish considerably, have completely abandoned their tents, which they hope to unpack one happy day, when they reconstitute their herds.

Conserving the tent is the ultimate action that ties a nomad to the steppes. Abandoning the tent remains an extreme last option and signals complete conversion. In a society undergoing dramatic changes, compromise and multiplicity of strategies are safer. Transhumance enables the keepers of livestock to combine agricultural and pastoral activities. The owner of a house can recruit a shepherd, who will take care of the herd. Or he can entrust this task to some household members, who will move with the tent, while he and the rest of the family inhabit the house and primarily perform agricultural tasks.

Some elites, 2% of the surveyed nomads, even prefer to reside in town and to manage the activities relating to the market and public administration, while designating a part of their household to the countryside in order to look after the herd. Hence, these are households of which one part is sedentary and the other is nomadic.

The word *barra* signifying 'the exterior' has only recently been used by the Beni Guil to designate the countryside opposed to the new agglomerations of Tendirra and Bouarfa. The smaller agglomerations, such as Lmangoub and Maatarka, still are part of this 'exterior'. The nomads are aware that in a few decades the steppes have become the periphery of a dramatically expanding urban space. Thus, several nomads are no longer satisfied with life in the 'exterior': 25% have a house in town,

in which 6% reside permanently. However, as it has already been noted, it is not the acquisition of a house that inaugurates the nomad's conversion. Frequently, the house, like the truck or the cistern, is a new, but indispensable accessory for the new conditions of livestock keeping. Above all, the abandonment of the tent would mark the nomad's conversion.

Settling in agglomerations does not necessarily concern poor nomads only. Among the nomads settled in town, 51% were large- or middle-scale livestock owners and possessed a double habitation (*khayma* and *ʿachcha*). Only 19% were poor and had to be satisfied with a small tent. Sedentarization, the final conversion of a nomad, more often affects wealthy than poor pastoralists. Besides, only 4% of sedentary nomads declared that they had fixed their tents. The majority (70%) had directly transferred from the mobile habitation to the house. This indicates that immobilization of the tent is neither an intermediate stage nor necessary for sedentarization.

In town, the former nomads no longer stick to animal husbandry. The modesty of herds indicates that livestock keeping is conducted as a supplementary activity. In effect, 83% of sedentary Beni Guil have broken all ties to livestock keeping. More than half (52%) live from agriculture, 21% from urban professions, and 10% are unemployed.

## Survival

After the disintegration of the *douar*, mobility, formerly a triviality, has become a heroic deed. Half of the nomads abandoned mobility after the droughts in the 1970s and 1980s. 42% of them fixed their tents during the 1970s and 36% during the 1980s. The word *mgaytan* (pl. *guitan*) is applied to the nomad who broke with mobility, even if his tent is fixed in the pasture areas and far from agglomerations. Still, even a settled shepherd is under constraint for reason of animal health to change his camp on average once a month. The herd must not graze, nor stay in one place for a long time. The distance between the new and old campsite rarely exceeds five kilometers. It is distinguished between *rhal* which signifies mobility and change of pastures, and *thawel* or *beddel dar*, which implies the change of campsite within the same pasture.

The majority (81%) of nomads links the immobilization of the tent to the modesty of herds. Only 7% name agricultural purposes as reason for their settlement. The abandonment of mobility prominently affects pastoralists, who own less than 60 sheep. According to these, a small herd does not justify mobility. Since the 1970s, the average herd size has been in continuous decline: it has fallen from 252 sheep to 68, and from 37 goats to 16. It must also be noted that in 1989, more than a third of nomads possessed less than 60 head. However, at the time of the *douar*, poverty

did not fatalistically imply settlement. Even those with small herds could relocate thanks to the *douar* arrangement. They had the possibility of nomadizing with the grand, who in turn lent them their camels and supplied them with life's necessities. The inequality of wealth did not translate into terms of mobility and sedentarization. To the contrary, these relationships of dependence allowed the needy to stick to their nomadic life. After the dissolution of the *douar*, the poor who did not possess camels were harshly condemned to settlement or emigration. Sedentarization has been much more massive and accelerated because half of the nomads, as we have already seen, did not keep camels.

The possibility of integrating new pastoral units always exists, but requires a substantial amount of money. The poor can no longer count on the grand, who have broken with their traditional generosity. The possession of a truck demands heavy cost and thus forces its owner to lend it out for money. But for a small pastoralist, the cost of renting a truck is largely disproportionate to the herd size. The camel, in contrast to the truck, permitted the integration of the nomad and the installation of diverse social networks, some based on contracts and others on patronage. The agricultural activity rarely constitutes the primary reason for sedentarization. According to several witnesses, I assert that it is especially the immobility which favors the growing interest in agriculture, not the reverse. For example, one livestock producer explains:

I no longer move around with my tent. Twelve or 13 years have passed, since I dug this well and now I am settled. I don't own animals for the transport of my tents, I don't have the means to rent a truck. Also, I only have few ewes and goats (20), that is why I don't move my tent anymore.

The immobility of the tent does not necessarily imply immobile herds. Some combinations are possible between traditional nomadism and sedentarization. 42% of households no longer relocate their herds, while 7% combine immobility of the tent with mobility of herds. Whenever the household disposes of a double habitation, the grand tent remains fixed, while a part of the family moves with the small tent in search of better pastures. Another pastoralist fixed his tent close to fields he cultivates, while continuing to relocate his herd:

For three years I have not left the pasture of Sfiya. I used to move with the small tent (*‘achcha*), because the big tent (*khayma*) stayed fixed close to the fields. Sometimes I moved without the small tent, because it's so heavy. We conducted the herd (60 head) and we passed the night out in the open under the starry expanse. Since 1971, the grand tent has not once left the pastures of Sfiya, now it is so heavy that it no longer can be transported. Two donkeys and one old mule, what can you do with that?

A needy nomad has always had the option of pitching his tent near villages, where he could find a job. But this was almost always temporary, not irreversible. It generally was a provisional solution of pastoralists waiting for clement years. The most important center for this make-shift settlement used to be Figuig. For example,

within the period from 1914 to 1936 not a single nomad was enumerated in this oasis. In 1943, 700 nomads were settled in the vicinity of Figuig. In 1948, in the aftermath of the famous drought, their number exceeded 2,100. In 1952, the year marking the end of the drought and the revival of pastoral activity, all sedentary nomads, except a few households, again removed to the pastures.

The demographic evolution of nomads has depended on climatic conditions on the high plateaus and notably the great droughts of 1945 and the following years. The return of more favorable conditions motivated the nomads' departure with the exception of some miserable day laborers and shepherds, who together with the beggars represent the proletariat of the oasis' (Bounfous 1952).

Since the 1960s, the needy nomads, who were held by nothing to the pastures anymore, came to fix their tents or that which remained of them, close to Tendrara or Bouarfa. Presently, a group of 50 shanty tents can be observed at the periphery of Bouarfa. The new centers offer the ex-nomads the chance of new jobs. A small pastoralist, who settled six years ago on a pasture situated five kilometers from Tendrara, explains his choice:

I don't have the means for mobility. I don't have a truck. So I moved close to the market in Tendrara. I am no longer a nomad, my herd is very modest, 24 ewes and 15 goats. I have two cows. I started raising cows after I settled. I have a chariot, but I only use it to transport water and goods bought on the *souk*.

Compared to the immobilization of the tent on a pasture, to move closer to the *souk* is the last choice in the hands of small nomads hanging on to the pastoral life. The costs of transport towards 'urban' centers can be met and the chance for family members to find jobs is greater. Yet, since the disappearance of the *douar*, the return of sedentary pastoralists to a nomadic way of life is exceptional. Sedentarization is no longer a provisional alternative in reaction to difficult and transitional climatic conditions. Sedentariness, for modest nomads, has become an integral part of their livelihood systems in the context of structural transformations limiting the mobility of people and livestock.

## Conclusion

Transformations of nomadic societies are often connected to imbalances between ancestral strategies (e.g. far-distance collective mobility based on dromedary use) and new, constantly changing socio-economic contexts. In the present paper, I have tried to describe, for the Beni Guil case, empirical linkages between contextual changes – in areas such as markets, the state, etc. – and pastoral innovations. My aim was to analyze how contextual changes affect the situation of Beni Guil nomads. In order to do this, I focused on showing how the nomads integrate external pressures into their strategies. The reduction of pasture spaces was one of the

major constraints that pushed the nomads to buy trucks. They were thus the very first actors to transform new opportunities into resources that serve the renewal of Moroccan nomadism. In adopting pastoral innovations, they were able to overcome the imbalances between their ancestral strategies and the challenges brought about by contextual transformation.

## Notes

- (1) The quantitative data presented in this article originate from a questionnaire-based survey conducted among 700 nomads of the Beni Guil tribe. The survey took place between November 1989 and June 1991 (Projet de Développement des Parcours et de l'Élevage dans l'Oriental, Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Réforme Agraire, 1991).
- (2) The nomads studied here often qualify themselves as *'rab*, the alteration of the Arabic word *a'rāb*. The Arabic text of the Treaty of 1845 signed by Morocco and France qualified the Beni Guil as *a'rāb*. In the French text this was improperly translated with the word "Arabs". In 1888, the tribes of the Beni Guil sent a letter to the sultan of Morocco, where the name of their confederation is preceded by the word *a'rāb*. The elites are called *Mmaline l'a'rāb*, the master of the nomads. The word *'rab* is equally applied to all nomads in order to stress the cultural differences with sedentary groups.
- (3) All the wells with little depths.
- (4) In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the number of sheep the Beni Guil possessed was estimated at 470,500 (De La Martinière and Lacroix 1896, 273).